



Veterans Justice Outreach Program

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VJO Specialists

- Operational since 2009
- Outreach to Veterans in contact with law enforcement, jails, and courts
- Goal is to provide timely access to VA services for eligible justice-involved Veterans to avoid unnecessary criminalization and incarceration of Veteran defendants and offenders with mental illness and/or traumatic brain injury (TBI).
 - In communities where justice programs relevant for Veterans exist, VA will take the initiative in building working relationships to see that eligible justice-involved Veterans get needed care
 - In communities where no such programs exist, VA will reach out to potential justice system partners to connect eligible justice-involved Veterans with VA services
- Number of Veterans arrested each year: 1,159,500 (BJS estimate)
- Number of Veterans in local jails: 72,600 (BJS estimate)
- 10% on average



Purpose

- “The purpose of the VJO initiative is to avoid unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration among Veterans by ensuring that eligible Veterans in contact with the criminal justice system have access to Veterans Health Administration mental health and substance abuse services.” -
Department of Veterans Affairs, April 30, 2009. Under Secretary for Health’s Information Letter



Areas of Focus

- Courts and Attorneys
 - Provide information and education about Veterans' issues to include, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Substance Abuse, Housing, Employment, and Healthcare services available to Veterans.
 - With Veteran consent, education provided on Veteran specific level
 - Also, through general education, such as, 2013 Spring Public Defender Attorney and Investigator Conference



Areas of Focus

- Law Enforcement
 - Provide training to local law enforcement on Veterans' issues and strategies to help work with Veterans
 - Classroom teaching in Crisis Intervention Training program
 - Collaboration with local county government



Areas of Focus

- Jails
 - Develop communication with jails to identify Veterans who are incarcerated and engage Veterans in available resources upon release
 - Established referral system with local facilities
 - Collaboration with local Mental Health Jail Diversion Program



A VJO Specialist CAN:

- Serve Veterans of all eras
- Assess Veteran's health care needs, identify appropriate VA and non-VA services
- Refer and link Veteran to comprehensive health care services
- With Veteran consent, communicate treatment information
- Function as a court team member



A VJO Specialist CANNOT

- Perform forensic/psychosocial evaluations for the court
- Accept custody
- Guarantee program acceptance
- Write lengthy court report, complete diversion paperwork
- Advocate for legislation



Limits on VA Authorization

- Can provide:
 - Outreach, assessment, referral and linkage to services to incarcerated Veterans
 - Treatment for justice-involved Veterans who are not incarcerated
- Title 38 CFR 17.38 does not allow VHA to provide:
 - Hospital and outpatient care for a Veteran who is
 - Either a patient or inmate in an institution of another government agency
 - If that agency has a duty to give that care or services



My Spiel...

- I'm a social worker.
- I work with Veterans who have pending criminal charges.
- I'm not an attorney; I don't represent people in court; I don't provide legal advice.
- As a social worker, my top priority is making sure you get connected to the services you need.
- Also, I can act as a liaison between VHA and the court system, to provide treatment information.



Services

- For example,
 - Medical care
 - Polytrauma/TBI
 - Women's Health
 - Caregiver Support
 - Mental Health
 - Substance Abuse Treatment
 - OEF/OIF/OND Team
 - Work Restoration Programs
 - HOUSING!!!



Homelessness Risk

Incarceration as an adult male is the single highest risk factor of ever being homeless (NSHAPC/Burt, 1996)

“Lengthy periods of incarceration in remote locations often attenuate the social and family ties that are crucial for successful reentry into the community.” (p. 9-5).

“...(E)ven short term incarcerations may disrupt lives and interfere with the ability to maintain employment and housing.” (p. 9-6).

(Metraux, Roman, and Cho on prison reentry/jail stays, National Symposium on Homelessness Research, 2007)



Housing Services Support

- National Call Center for Homeless Veterans
 - 877-4AID-VET (877-424-3838)
- Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program
 - Provides financial assistance to very low-income Veterans and their families to prevent homelessness or rapidly re-house. Administered by grantees, local non-profit organizations. Your VJO will have this contact information.



Housing Services Support

- HUD-VASH (Housing and Urban Development – VA Supportive Housing)
 - Provides permanent housing and ongoing case management services for chronically homeless Veterans
- Grant and Per Diem
 - Provides transitional housing and supportive services through grants with community agencies
- Outreach
 - Homeless Outreach Specialists, VJOs



Numbers

- To date in FY13 , through Charles George VAMC, assisted over 100 justice-involved Veterans
- To date in FY13, outreached and enrolled 10 Veterans new to VHA
- In FY12, outreached and enrolled 19 Veterans new to CGVAMC, 15 of 19, new to VHA



For Example:

- Mr. S
 - 34 y.o., chronically homeless, male Veteran with schizophrenia and substance dependence diagnoses
 - Multiple arrests/charges for trespassing, resisting public officer, possession of drug paraphernalia, and possession toxic vapor substance (i.e. Bizarro)
 - Accepted to JUST, Justice United in Support of Treatment (mental health jail diversion)
 - Treatment and Housing Plan
 - Released from custody for implementation of plan, supervised by Pre-Trial Supervision



Outcome

- Stabilization of schizophrenia through inpatient psychiatry admission
- Directly transferred to Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program
- Directly placed in permanent housing through HUD-VASH
- Also supported by the community through an ACT team
- Symptoms stable, sober, and housed!!!